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BY

J. W. ALSPAUGH

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Letter from Senator Hershel V. Johnson of Georgia.

To several gentlemen in Middle Georgia.
Sandy Grove, near Bartow P. O. Ga.
September 25th, 1864.

Gentlemen:

Your letter of the 14th inst. was received several days ago. I have taken time to consider the object it proposes—"the inauguration of a peace movement at the South." I long for peace as ardently as "the hart pants for the cooling water brook." I agree with you, that "this unnatural strife cannot be terminated by arms." The pen, not the sword, must at last, solve our difficulties, and the sooner the controversy can be transferred from the field of battle to the forum of rational and honorable negotiation, the better it will for both governments. I agree with you that the peace movement at the North should be duly encouraged at the South. To this end, we should lose no occasion, nor omit any proper means to convince the North that we are still, as we always have been, willing to adjust the difficulties between us, upon honorable terms.—We have avowed our desire for peace and readiness for negotiation from the very beginning of the war, in every form in which organized communities can give expression to their will. We have avowed it in Executive messages, in Legislative resolves, and Congressional manifestoes.

What more can we do, in view of our situation? Gladly would I do more, if it were possible. But I do not believe that it is. We can inaugurate no movement that would lead to the result so earnestly desired by every friend of humanity, and so urgently demanded by the interests of both sections. Our military situation would seem to forbid even the attempt.—The capture of Atlanta and Richmond is regarded by the authorities of the United States, as all that is necessary for our ultimate subjugation. They have captured Atlanta and Gen. Grant says the early capture of Richmond is certain beyond a doubt. What, under the circumstances, would be the probable effect of any peace movement at the South? Would it conciliate the North? Would it inspire the government of the United States with a sense of justice, or forbearance, or magnanimity? So far from this, it would be construed into intimidation on our part, and it would stimulate and intensify the war spirit of the North. It would be regarded as our confession of overthrow and the premonitory symptom of our readiness to sue for mercy on the bended knee of unconditional surrender.

In view of the avowed object of the war on the part of the Northern Government, it is very certain there can be no peace, upon any honorable terms, so long as its present rulers are in power. The President of the United States has proclaimed emancipation and his determination to enforce it by the sword. He has announced, in advance of any formal offer of negotiation on our part that he will not treat with rebels (as he is pleased to call the people of the Confederate States) except upon the condition that we lay down our arms, abandon slavery, and return to the Union. He will then grant such terms as may be compatible with his sense of justice, liberality and magnanimity. So long, therefore, as its present rulers are in power, and this policy shall be adhered to, there can be no peace between us and the Government of the United States, which will not bring upon us confiscation, social disorganization, poverty, degradation, and intolerable dishonor. What worse would be our doom

if subjugated by military power? Subjugation is no worse than the submission offered to us as the only condition of peace. It would at least save to us our honor.

If the people of the United States will change their rulers; if they will repudiate the avowed policy of subjugation; if they will return to a practical recognition of the true principles which underlie the whole structure of American governments, organized to secure and maintain constitutional liberty, the door will soon be opened for an honorable and lasting peace. Peace, upon any other terms, involves the loss of liberty, because it will be the result of force—not of choice and compact between co-equal and sovereign States. Peace, upon any other terms, means despotism, enthroned in empire—not republicanism founded upon "the consent of the governed" and organized "in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."—This is the kind of peace which the United States now propose to enforce upon the people of the Confederate States—the peace of death to constitutional liberty—the stagnant peace of despotism—the peace which chains and prison-bars impose.

I look with anxiety to the approaching Presidential election in the United States. For although the Chicago platform falls below the great occasion, and the nominee still lower, yet the triumph of the Democratic party of the North will certainly secure a temporary suspension of hostilities and an effort to make peace by an appeal to reason. They confess that four years of bloody war, as a means of restoring the Union, has proven a failure. They declare that the true principles of American government have been disregarded and trampled under foot, by the present Executive of the United States.—Their success will bring a change of administration and with that, a change of policy. It will, more, and what is infinitely greater importance, it will bring the two contending parties face to face, in the arena of reason and consultation.—Then and there can be discussed the history of all our difficulties, the principles involved in the bloody issue and the respective interests of both governments.—Such is my conviction of the omnipotence of truth and right, that I feel an abiding confidence, that an honorable peace would ultimately spring from such deliberations.

In their long cherished devotion to the Union of the States—a sentiment which challenges my respect—the people of the North, it seems to me, have fallen into two grave and capital errors. On the one hand, they attach an undue importance to the mere fact or form of Union, ignoring the principle and objects of the Union, and forgetting that it ceases to be valuable when it fails to secure that object and maintain those principles. On the other hand they think that the States of the Confederacy have separated from the U. States in contempt of that Union; in a wanton disposition to insult the flag and to destroy the government of which it is the emblem.—Both opinions are wrong. The old Union was an organization of States. But it was more: it was such an organization, founded upon great principles, in order to give the most efficient security for the maintenance of those very same principles.—These principles are the sovereignty of the States; the right of the people to govern themselves; the right of each State to regulate its own domestic affairs; to establish its own system of labor, and to pursue its own career of enterprise, subject to no restrictions except such as are expressed in the Federal Constitution. On these the Union was based, and constituted the solemn guarantee of all, that each State should be protected in their undisturbed enjoyment. When it failed to do this, or what is worse, when its government passed into the administration of those whose avowed policy and measures must lead to the overthrow of those principles, it was virtually at an end, and in their opinion, ceased to be valuable to the people of the Confederate States. Hence, secession was not resorted to merely to throw off the Union. Our people loved

the Union, and honored its once glorious flag, for the rich memories that clustered around it.

They left it with a reluctance and regret to which history will scarcely do justice. They were, as they are now, wedded to the principles on which the Union was founded, they separated from it, but vindicated and maintained them. Whether they acted wisely or unwisely must be left to the impartial arbitrament of time and coming events. But no people were ever prompted to so momentous a step by loftier devotion to constitutional liberty. For they, we are denounced as rebels against the government of the United States, and threatened with the bloody doom of traitors; our country is invaded, our homes desolated and our people slain by hostile armies. We are told that we must be conquered or exterminated. The North is fighting us to maintain the mere fact or form of Union, by force. We are defending ourselves, to preserve the great principles which lay at the foundation of the Union. If we be rebels against one, if disposed to bandy epithets, we might reply that they who advocate and wage this war against us, are traitors to the other. If there is wrong on either or both sides, let impartial history decide who are the greater sinners. This is the naked truth. When thus viewed, how cruel and unnatural is this war! Why should the North fight us? Especially why should the thousands of the professed constitutional men of the North lend their countenance and aid to our subjugation? We are struggling for principles which should be as dear to them as they are to us. Do they not see that our overthrow will be the downfall of constitutional liberty—fatal to their freedom as well as ours—the inauguration of an irresponsible and unlimited despotism? Correct ideas are slow in their progress of leavening the mass of mind; truth is ever trampled upon when passion gains sway. But the ultimate prevalence of the one, and the ascendancy of the other is only a question of time, and then, peace. The light already begins to break in upon the thinking and better part of the Northern people.—They begin to see that this war is not waged to restore the Union in good faith—the Union of the constitution; but, either to secure disunion, by avowed and degrading terms of peace, or to convert it into a despotism by subjugating the South.—Hence the Chicago movement. Hence the note of discontent that is being sounded by a portion of the press and statesmen of the North. God opens the light, that the people of the North may understand the position which we occupy, and discern the volcano that threatens to engulf their liberty. They will then consider negotiation not only politically, but absolutely necessary. Then peace will come, predicated upon those principles so essential to both governments, and all our strifes and difficulties solved in conformity to the best interest of the parties.

In view of our position, permit me to repeat, I do not see how we can inaugurate any movement likely to lead to an honorable peace. We are the party assailed. Peace movements must come from the assailing party. I would not be understood however, as standing upon any point of etiquette, as to who should take the initiative—I have no such feeling. All I mean to say is, that in view of the avowed policy of the United States government, any advance on our part is already rejected before made, and that we cannot make any upon the conditions announced by its President. I would not hesitate to take the initiative if there was the least hope of a favorable response, or an honorable result. But if the government of the United States should pass into other hands, repudiate the policy of subjugation, and indicate a desire for negotiation, I would, if need be, have our government propose it, certainly, accept the offer of it, if tendered by the Federal authorities. Such I believe to be the spirit and temper of our people. Such I am satisfied is the sentiment of the President of the Confederate States. He has avowed on every occasion which required him to allude to the subject. The North can have peace at any

moment. All that they need to do is to let us alone—cease to fight us; or if they prefer, agree to negotiate a peace on terms honorable to both parties. We are willing—always have been willing, and shall continue to be willing. But as long as they fight us, the war must continue. For what can we do, but defend? We have no power to stop their fighting short of unconditional submission to the terms announced by the President of the United States.

Are our people prepared for peace upon those terms? It is an insult to ask the question, unless indeed we suppose, contrary to the whole history of our struggle, that they did not count the cost in the beginning, and have no just appreciation of the mighty principles involved. The President of the Confederate States never uttered anything more true, than when he said to the unofficial messenger of President Lincoln, that "we are not fighting for slavery, but for the right of self government."

So long as the people will keep this great truth in view and obey the inspiration which it should kindle in the breasts of freemen, they cannot be conquered.—They may have their land desolated, their property destroyed, their towns and cities burned and sacked, but subjugated they never can be. We cannot have peace so long as the present rulers of the United States are in power. We may say not, even if the Chicago movement should be successful. But let us wait and hope for the change and peace. If it come not then we must rely upon the omnipotence of truth and right, and the judicious economy and use of the means which God has given us. Patience, fortitude, courage, hope and faith are as much elements of heroic patriotism as they are of Christian perfection. It is indispensable to cherish them with untiring devotion, as the only condition on which liberty can be gained or preserved. Her christening from the beginning, was the baptism of blood. She requires her votaries to lock arms and shields around her altar, resolved to die freemen, rather than live slaves. If this be the spirit of the people, ultimate success will be the reward for their sufferings and sacrifices. For their encouragement, history is replete with examples, of which none is more striking or more inspiring than that of the revolutions of 1776. Then let there be no despondency—no relaxation of effort and energy—no abatement of courage and heroic resolve.

I am very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
HERSHEL V. JOHNSON.

State and National Educational Association.

The next Annual Meeting of the State Educational Association of North Carolina, will be held in Charlotte, on Tuesday, November 8th. The Educational Association of the Confederate States, will meet in the same place on November 9th, and the friends of education in North Carolina thus have an opportunity of attending, during the same week, and by one trip, both the State and National Societies.

There never was a period in our history when the duties and responsibilities of those engaged in the instruction of the rising generation were more obvious and important, and those who neglect the opportunities of this day of decision must expect to be arraigned and condemned at the bar of the Future.

C. H. WILEY,	Executive Committee.
Supt. Com. Schools, N. C.	
S. LANDER,	
Recording Secretary.	
W. J. PALMER,	
Corresponding Secretary.	

GRANT has issued an order to Sheridan for the utter destruction of the valley of Virginia—it is to be reduced by fire and sword to the condition of a desert.—The execution of this order will tend to the increase of Early's army largely.

The next annual session of the North Carolina M. F. Conference will meet at Mocksville, Davis county, on the 7th of December.